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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 3842
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1207
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1098
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3467
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 3845
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 8364
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LA PAZ 000007

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ARMITAGE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/04/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: MORE INFO ON EVO

REF: A. LA PAZ 3755
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 3763
[1](#)C. LA PAZ 1238
[1](#)D. LA PAZ 1062 (2004)

Classified By: Amb. David N. Greenlee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Evo Morales rose to the presidency on a wave of ethnic identification and widespread frustration, embodying the aspirations of his own indigenous majority and signaling for the middle class a break from the corrupt, inept political elite and the social upheaval it increasingly produced. Morales speaks only halting Aymara and Quechua, the main indigenous languages, but his roots in poverty and later in syndicate politics lend him legitimacy for most Bolivians as their first truly representative elected president.

[1](#)2. (C) Born Juan Evo Morales Ayma on October 26, 1959 in Orinoca, Oruro, in Bolivia's western highlands, he was one of seven children, only three of whom survived childhood. His family tended sheep and llama and, during high school, Morales balanced his studies with work as a breadmaker and bricklayer. He performed obligatory military service in Cochabamba and then returned to Oruro and played trumpet in a local band. Morales described his life on the altiplano as "survival, hunger, and misery."

[1](#)3. (C) Morales's family moved for economic reasons from Oruro to the Chapare (Tropico de Cochabamba) in 1979, joining a flood of migrants, mostly former miners and their families, to plant coca. He showed leadership early on by organizing a soccer league and captaining one of its teams. He also claims to have been exposed for the first time to labor unions and favorably contrasts cultivating coca, the symbol, he says, of political power, with his harsh experience on the altiplano. But Morales also developed in the Chapare deep distrust of the Drug Enforcement Administration. He claims to have watched a friend burned to death as an accused narcotrafficker and reports watching DEA agents machine gun campesinos from a helicopter, supposedly leaving five dead. While the facts may not support his memory, Morales continues to feel deeply wounded by charges that he is variously a

narcotrafficker or narcoterrorist - both of which he vehemently denies.

¶4. (C) Morales began his career as a labor leader in 1983, when a Chapare union (Sindicato de Colonizadores en el Chapare) named him their Secretary of Sports. After two years, Morales rose to be the organization's Secretary General. In 1988, he became Executive Secretary of the Cocalero Federation of the Tropics, and then assumed the presidency of the six federations of coca growers of the Chapare in 1996. Morales organized a political party, called the Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the People (IPSP in Spanish) in 1995, but had difficulty obtaining recognition from the Supreme Electoral Court. He transitioned from a labor leader in the Chapare to national politics in 1997, when he was elected to Congress (as a uninominal deputy on the now-defunct United Left party ticket). In 2002, Morales formed an alliance with the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party (founded July 23, 1987) to run as its presidential candidate (and also to run as a uninominal deputy in the event he didn't win the presidency). Morales came in second in the June 2002 presidential elections with 20 percent of the vote. He did not contest his loss, but accepted his place in Congress.

¶5. (C) Morales's poor working class and cocolero background influences his leadership style. He can be proud, stubborn and suspicious of outsiders, particularly Americans. He is most comfortable with coca growers in the Chapare and within the familiar labor union structure, where his "anti-imperialist" rhetoric is well-received. In meetings (including with foreign diplomats in Bolivia or dignitaries

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abroad) he seldom tailors himself to his audience, often monopolizing conversations. In a recent pre-election meeting with the OAS observer mission, he lambasted the United States and directed his comments toward a member of the team who looked (and was) American, without regard for the representative's OAS employment. In his own party, there is much speculation about tension between he and VP-elect Alvaro Garcia Linera, perhaps because of Garcia Linera's publicly perceived intellectual superiority. At the same time, Morales is perfectly capable of slapping down in-house rivals, like former MAS founding member and senator Filemon Escobar, when he feels they are no longer loyal to him.

¶5. (C) On a personal note, Morales is notoriously single with at least two illegitimate children. During the campaign, he dodged press questions about his marital intentions by saying that he would soon reveal the identity of his future first lady, who some believed was Adriana Gil Moreno, a 23-year-old MAS activist who is an alternative city council member in Santa Cruz. Gil finished high school in the United States and studied international relations in Alabama; she is now studying law at the Private University of Santa Cruz. Since the landslide victory, however, talk of Morales's family life has quieted.

¶6. (C) Comment: In his first meeting with the Ambassador on January 2 (ref), Morales seemed self-assured, if a little suspicious, but clearly was the senior partner in his relationship with VP-elect Alvaro Garcia Linera, also present at the discussion. Morales generally showed more pragmatism than ideology and seemed interested in opening and maintaining a dialog with the Embassy. At the same time, he responded in-kind but proportionately to the Ambassador's no-nonsense, no-platitudes approach and seemed willing to take on board information that may have challenged some of his preconceived notions of the U.S. role in Bolivia. The meeting ended on a reasonably cordial note and indicated that treating Morales with respect but without kid gloves may hold the most promise for future cooperation. End comment.

GREENLEE